Goal-Setting: Taking Action

This step of the career planning process is when you proactively put all the pieces of information about yourself and your carefully collected career information together to produce a set of career-related goals and options. The work you have done in the self-assessment (http://hr.berkeley.edu/development/career-development/self-assessment) and career awareness (http://hr.berkeley.edu/careers/career-awareness) phases should have helped you identify some possible career directions (http://hr.berkeley.edu/development/career-development/self-assessment/career-direction).

Most likely, you will have some decision-making (http://hr.berkeley.edu/development/career-development/goal-setting/decision-making) to do as you consider and eliminate possible career directions and options. It is important to study your own decision-making history to learn your tendencies and style. Learning about and utilizing various other decision-making strategies can also be useful. Trust not only the facts of your gathered information but also your intuition. Believe in yourself and the time and energy you have invested in your own career development. You are ready to start making career-related decisions happen, such as:

- Changing jobs
- Choosing a different career path
- Taking classes to begin a career change
- Networking (http://hr.berkeley.edu/development/career-development/career-management/relationship-building/networking) and conducting informational interviews (http://hr.berkeley.edu/development/career-development/career-management/job-search/informational-interviewing) to get your foot in the door of a particular career field

Developing a career development action plan (http://hr.berkeley.edu/development/career-development/career-management/planning/action-plan) is the main focus of this phase of career development planning. Be as specific as you can in outlining the steps in achieving your short-term and long-term career-related goals. Include in your plan how you will go about building and maintaining your professional network and community of support.

Taking action is often easier said than done. Obstacles to taking action do appear and life is often unpredictable. Even though you might have come up with a detailed and thoughtfully constructed career plan, your career goals can change for many reasons - circumstances change or unexpected opportunities arise seemingly out of nowhere. Still, having a career plan can provide a road map that guides your actions and keeps you moving forward, while you keep your eyes and ears open to opportunities for planned happenstance (http://hr.berkeley.edu/development/career-development/career-management/change-resilience).

In addition, there is a support group for staff members who are actively taking action steps to develop their careers and would like ongoing support and encouragement in their efforts. This group meets monthly and is a great opportunity to network with other staff on campus, get tips and useful tools, set

goals for the upcoming month, and renew one's commitment to taking career development actions. For more information, go to the Career Compass (http://careercompass.berkeley.edu) website. Follow the link to Career Development Workshops (http://careercompass.berkeley.edu/careerdevl/resources/workshops.html). Look for the workshop entitled *Career Strategies Group.* Register through the UCB Learning Center at the blu campus portal (https://blu.berkeley.edu/).

Obstacles to Taking Action

Obstacles to taking career actions could include both external obstacles, as well as internal obstacles. The following chart shows some examples of each kind of obstacle. *Check off any that may apply to you – things that have derailed you in the past or currently from making the changes you want to make in your career life. Read on for tips on tackling these obstacles.*

EXTERNAL OBSTACLES	INTERNAL OBSTACLES
Clutter and Chaos	Procrastination
Family Expectations and Needs	Fear of Failure
Peer Pressures/Societal Expectations	Fear of Success
Childcare Arrangements and Cost	Perfectionism
Stressful Work Life	Lack of Motivation/Apathy
Difficult Working Relationships	Depression
Organizational Changes	Anxiety
Changes in Field of Work	Lack of Assertiveness
Financial Difficulties	Low Self-Esteem
	Poor Time Management Skills
	Career Indecisiveness
	Lack of Stress Management Skills
	Need for More Information
	Difficulty with Negotiations
	Difficulty Asking for Support

Note that the list of Internal Obstacles is longer than the list of External Obstacles. This is usually the case – we tend to put up more internal barriers to our career success than there are external barriers. The good news is that we have more control over the internal barriers.

Psychologist Nancy Betz has written about Career Self-Efficacy, which refers to the beliefs you have about your ability to successfully perform a career-related behavior, such as trying until you obtain the job you want. These beliefs will influence whether you take action steps in your career development process, how much effort you will put into these actions, and how long you will persist at taking action in the face of obstacles. It may help to think of career self-efficacy as the opposite of self-doubt about your career prospects or about your ability to create the career you want.

If you have found yourself stuck in taking action steps, it may be helpful to focus on increasing your sense of career self-efficacy. To increase your career self-efficacy, focus on four areas: accomplishments, modeling, encouragement, and anxiety-reduction.

Past Accomplishments: *Think back on the 5 main accomplishments you are most proud of in your life. List them with detailed descriptions of what you did. Analyze the list to identify your transferable skills (http://hr.berkeley.edu/development/career-development/self-assessment/skills) that are part of each accomplishment.*

Modeling: *Think back on what kinds of skills you have had a chance to observe others doing well. Select experiences where you got a prolonged exposure, such as in internships, jobs, volunteer work, your family interactions, or other opportunities for vicarious learning. These skills are also skills that you most likely have just from having experienced them in person.*

Encouragement: *Think back on the positive feedback and encouragement you have received. Focus on the people who have really taken the time to get to know you and who have been your biggest supporters. Write down the feedback you received and notice how your sense of belief in yourself increases as you read it and remember receiving this feedback. Think now about what kind of encouragement you want to make the career changes you are considering.*

Anxiety-Reduction: *Change is anxiety-provoking for most people and career development is full of change or potential change. Reducing your anxiety will help you feel more of a sense of control and will increase your confidence in yourself and your abilities. Consider what has helped you feel more in control and less anxious in the past and apply those ways of thinking or behaving now. Seek support from a career counselor if needed.*

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